

Library bids are below estimate

By John Chaffee
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DUXBURY — The cost of converting a former school building to a library may be lower than estimated.

Nine bids for the job of turning the former upper Alden School into the town's new public library were opened yesterday, and the three lowest are below the architect's estimate of \$4.7 million.

"I'm especially pleased with the three lowest bids, all of which are from very qualified construction firms," said Deborah Bornheimer, project manager and chairwoman of the library building committee.

The low bid, \$4,464,600, was submitted by Seaver Construction Co. of Woburn.

J. Slotnik Co. of Newton submitted the next-lowest bid, \$4,591,485.

John J. Callahan & Sons Inc. of Bridgewater bid \$4.6 million.

Because the Seaver bid does not include two of the six project revisions that were made by the architect after June 17, when bid documents were made available to contractors, Slotnik may challenge Seaver's right to the contract.

"That's a big problem," said Public Works Director Walter Tonaszuck, who opened the bids in a public meeting at Old Town Hall.

"We expect a protest," said Town Manager Rocco Longo, who, as the town's procurement officer, will award the contract.

"I'll discuss the bids with Debbie (Bornheimer), with the architect and with the town counsel before making a decision," Longo said.

Library bids are lower than expected

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The architect, Norman S. Baier of Galliher Baier and Best of Simsbury, Conn., attended the bid opening.

Longo said he expects to award a contract by early next week.

But Tonaszuck said a challenge to the award could delay the start of construction for as much as two months.

In addition to the basic building conversion, contractors also bid on reroofing the 1950 three-story addition on the south side of the original 1927 school building and landscaping the new library grounds.

Bids for the reroofing range from \$49,000 to \$99,000. The landscaping bids range from \$35,000 to \$175,000.

Architectural and engineering fees will add about \$500,000 to the total cost, Bornheimer said.

Furnishings, which will be paid for with money brought in by a private fund-raising campaign, will cost an estimated \$1 million.

All told, converting the red-brick former high school into a library is expected to cost \$6.3 million. But because of a state grant and private fund raising, the cost to taxpayers is expected to be about half that amount.

Last year, town meeting authorized the town to borrow up to \$5.5 million for the conversion, provided library trustees received an anticipated state grant of \$2.1 million for the project. A few months later, the trustees were awarded \$2.13 million under the state's public library construction program.

If all goes well, the new library could open in the fall of 1997, Bornheimer said.